

Sarri to discuss future after Europa League final

● Maurizio Sarri expects talks with Chelsea after Europa League final

● Manager linked with Serie A return but 'happy' at club

AFP | London

Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri plans showdown talks with the club's hierarchy after next week's Europa League final to see if they want the Italian to remain in charge next season.

Sarri's side recovered from a mid-season slump in time to secure Champions League football next season via a third-placed finish in the Premier League, and could end the season with a trophy when they face Arsenal in Baku on May 29.

However, Sarri's style of football has not been universally embraced by the Chelsea fans during his first season in charge and rumours in his homeland have linked the former Napoli boss with the vacant managerial roles at Juventus and Roma.

"I will speak to the club as I want to see if they are happy with me or not," said Sarri yesterday. "I have two more years on my contract."

The Milan stock exchange does not appear to share Chel-



Chelsea's Italian head coach Maurizio Sarri gestures on the touchline during a match

sea fans' reservations. Juventus shares rose 5.60 per cent yesterday afternoon following reports in the Italian press the Italian champions had been in contact with Sarri.

Juventus are looking for a manager after parting last week with Massimiliano Allegri, who won the Italian title in each of his five seasons in charge. Juventus shares, which dipped below 0.60 Euros last May before Cristiano Ronaldo arrived, reached 1.46 euros yesterday.

Sarri insisted any decision on his future should not be dependent on the outcome of the Europa League final.

"If the situation is like this then I want to go immediately," he added. "Ten months of

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MAURIZIO SARRI

work and then I have to play everything in 90 minutes, that is not right. You are either happy about my work or not happy."

'Good to wonderful season'

Sarri, though, defended his

record after guaranteeing the club's principal target for the campaign of a return to the Champions League and reaching two Cup finals.

"I think that we had a good season, with a lot of problems of course," he added.

"We finished third in the Premier League, final of League Cup, a very difficult competition, now we have the possibility to play the final of the Europa League.

"If we are able to win then it will become a wonderful season."

Arsenal's preparation for the final has been disrupted as midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan has decided not to travel on safety grounds due to political tensions between his native Armenia and hosts Azerbaijan.

Supporters from both clubs also face huge logistical issues and expense in trying to attend the final in a city nearly 2,500 miles from London.

And Sarri joined Arsenal's condemnation of selecting Baku as the host city for such a prestigious final.

"The location is a big problem for our fans. I think it was better to be in another location," he said.

On Mkhitaryan's decision not to travel, he added: "Really disappointed for the situation, I would like to see him on the pitch.

"In a decision like this you have to respect the decision of the man. Not of the player, of the man."



Team Lotto rider Australia's Caleb Ewan celebrates as he finishes first in the stage eleven of the 102nd Giro d'Italia

Aussie Ewan on the double in Giro d'Italia 11th stage

AFP | Novi Ligure, Italy

Australian Caleb Ewan won a sprint finish to take the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, just ahead of Frenchman Arnaud Demare.

Italian Valerio Conti, riding for UAE Emirates, kept the overall leader's pink jersey before the race heads for the first day in the Alps yesterday.

The 24-year-old Ewan of Lotto-Soudal claimed his second stage win of this year's race, four days after winning stage eight at Pesaro.

Three Italians who have been consistently active in breakaways -- Marco Frapporti, Mirco Maestri and Damiano Cima -- once again led a long escape in the 221km stage raced entirely in sunshine.

The trio were caught 25km from Novi Ligure, in north-western Italy.

In the sprint, Australian Ewan chased down German champion Pascal Ackermann, who had to settle for third, a day after crashing.

Demare of Groupama-FDJ, the winner of the crash-marred 10th stage at Modena, snatched second place for a boost to overtake Ackermann at the top of the points standings.

Italian Elia Viviani, winner of four stages last year, once again fell short, finishing fourth in the sprint.

Thursday's 12th stage covers 156km between Cuneo and Pinerolo in the Italian Alps, the scene of Fausto Coppi's mythical long-range attack in 1949.



Toni Kroos

Injured Kroos to miss Germany's next two Euro 2020 qualifiers

Reuters | Berlin

Germany will be without injured midfielder Toni Kroos and goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen for next month's Euro 2020 qualifiers while recovering first-choice keeper Manuel Neuer was provisionally included in the squad yesterday.

Real Madrid playmaker Kroos did not make Joachim Loew's 22-man list for the Group C games against Belarus and Estonia due to a muscle injury, the team said.

Neuer, who missed German champions Bayern Munich's final Bundesliga matches of the season with a

calf muscle problem, is still working to recover from his injury for the matches.

Barcelona's Ter Stegen, who has been challenging Neuer for the starting spot, will be missing with a knee problem.

Germany, who suffered a shock first round exit at last year's World Cup and were relegated from their section in the inaugural Nations League competition, visit Belarus on June 8 before hosting Estonia three days later.

Northern Ireland lead Group C with six points ahead of Germany and the Netherlands on three after the Germans, who have a game in hand, beat the Dutch 3-2 away in their opening game.

Estonia and Belarus have yet to earn a point.

Bangladesh skipper urges caution on WC hopes

AFP | Dhaka

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza has poured cold water on fan hopes for this month's World Cup, warning that the seventh-ranked team was facing an uphill battle in the group stage.

Supporters were jubilant after a tri-nation series win against Ireland and West Indies on the weekend handed Bangladesh its first ever multi-team tournament trophy.

But Mashrafe's side start the Cup race with a bracing fixture against South Africa, New Zealand and top-ranked hosts England in their first three matches.

"It will be difficult for us because our opponents in the opening three games are extremely strong," Mashrafe told reporters late Tuesday. "To get a positive result against them won't be easy."

Bangladesh twice beat eighth-ranked West Indies in the tri-nation warmup tournament, including in Friday's final.

Mashrafe said the win had height-

ened expectations of Bangladesh fans, along with other recent triumphs including the side's semi-finals appearance at the 2017 Champions Trophy.

"In last few years, people have started to come to watch us with expectations that we will win," he said.

"All I can say is that the World Cup will be a different ball game. If you follow cricket in England, you will see that a lot of runs are scored. It will need a different approach."

Bangladesh hope to at least match their previous best performance in a World Cup, reaching the quarter-finals in 2015.

Thorgan Hazard joins Dortmund on five-year deal

AFP | Berlin

Borussia Dortmund confirmed yesterday they have signed Thorgan Hazard, the younger brother of Chelsea star Eden, on a five-year deal from Borussia Moenchengladbach.

The 26-year-old winger announced in April that he was joining Dortmund, who finished runners-up in the Bundesliga this season, with only the details of the transfer to sort out.

"I am grateful for five great years at Borussia Moenchengladbach and the wonderful memories," said Hazard in a statement on Dortmund's club website.

"Now was exactly the right point in time to take the next step in my career.

"I am proud to be able to play for Borussia Dortmund - it is a top club with unbelievable fans."

Germany's top-selling daily Bild says the transfer should cost about 25 million euros (\$28m) plus add-ons.

The Belgium international scored 46 goals and provided 44 assists in 182 appearances for Gladbach.

"We are very pleased that Thorgan was fully convinced about joining

Borussia Dortmund," said sports director Michael Zorc.

"He is an experienced Bundesliga professional and Belgian national player who will help us with his speed and the quality of his finishing.

"He has proven his class over the past few years."

Hazard is the third new signing to join Dortmund for next season.

Germany international Nico Schulz will arrive from Hoffenheim in a deal worth 27 million euros, while teenage defender Mateu Morey, 19, is joining on a free transfer.



Thorgan Hazard